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AUTHOR Green, Robert L.
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ABSTRACT

Urban educational leaders must make the educational experience relevant to children and advocate constructive changes in educational, political, and social sectors to benefit their students. They need to know what effect environment has on achievement and the relationship of teachers' attitudes to student achievement. The blame for underachievement is not to be placed with the child. Educators must understand that social problems, both racial (discrimination) and economic (busing, housing, welfare, etc.), have a direct bearing on education. The training of urban school superintendents cannot be divorced from these problems. (Author/MC)

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A MANAGEMENT TRAINING MODEL FOR URBAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS*

By Robert L. Green**

Who serves as an advocate for school children these days? Urban teachers are striking for higher pay, better health and insurance benefits, and more control over their classrooms. Administrators are busy meeting the accountability requirements of state and federal aid to education.[1] The rest of the world is criticizing the American school system. Meanwhile, a whole nation's children is apparently lost in the shuffle.

Instead of assuming responsibility for student performance, educators often place the blame for underachievement with the child. In our present school system students are given standardized tests, then labeled "achievers" or "underachievers" according to their scores. If teachers and administrators were given standardized tests, how would they measure up as educators? Would they be achievers or underachievers?

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**Robert L. Green is Dean of the College of Urban Development and Professor of Educational Psychology at Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

[1] H. Thomas James, "Public Expectations II," Proceedings of the Conferences on Educational Accountability, Educational Testing Service, Washington, D.C. and Hollywood, CA, March 1971.

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Educators would balk at this idea, yet they allow tests to determine the life chances of their students.[2]

Many teachers start their careers with good intentions. Yet Shanker[3] notes the overwhelming majority do what the system compels them to do. New York City schools have absorbed 8,000 new teachers during each of the past 20 years. Although these teachers are a diverse group, after four weeks of teaching it is almost impossible to distinguish them from the teachers they replace. These teachers need leadership. Strong educational leadership is needed within our urban schools, especially at the elementary level where the young child needs the best of education.

WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

Urban educational leaders must make the education experience relevant to children. They must be able to identify urban problems and relate curricula to them. Urban school administrators cannot afford the luxuries of the suburban school superintendent. The suburban superintendent deals mostly with children from middle and upper middle income homes. The American school system was designed for these children who are most likely to succeed in our educational system. The suburban superintendent's path has already been beaten; he needs only to pave it.

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2 Edythe J. Gaines, "The Future of Accountability", Proceedings of the Conference on Educational Accountability, Educational Testing Service, Chicago, Illinois, June 1971.

3 Albert Shanker, "Possible Effects on Instructional Programs", Proceedings of the Conference on Educational Accountability, Educational Testing Service, Washington, D.C. and Hollywood, CA. March, 1971.

The urban administrator's job isn't so simple. Urban life is not usually filled with middle income life styles and day to day experiences. Most urban school children do not have all the advantages that higher income parents make available to their children.

To paraphrase Fred Hechinger, educational editor of the New York Times, the school is no longer the educator's castle.[4] The wall between the urban classroom and city street is very thin. On one side of the wall, leaders must provide guidance for staff and students. On the other side, they must become actively involved in community life. Leaders need to let their philosophies be known and must be where people can hear and see them.

ADVOCACY

Advocacy is the key to leadership. Urban superintendents must advocate constructive changes in educational, political and social sectors to benefit their students. Thus far, educators have not lived up to their responsibility in this regard.

Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. was way ahead of the religious establishment because he talked about a living ministry, about "making the ministry real." By this he meant using his ministry to improve the life of the downtrodden. Urban education can also be a living ministry, but first those who would be leaders must understand various aspects of the education process and urban life.

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4 Mark R. Shedd, "Issues in Implementation," Proceedings of the Conference on Educational Accountability, Educational Testing Service, Chicago, Illinois, June 1971.

WHAT URBAN ADMINISTRATORS NEED TO KNOW

The Environment's Effect Upon Achievement

Anyone who will improve the plight of the urban school child must realize that "underachievement" is not a permanent attribute of the poor or disadvantaged student. It is not genetic as some have argued and it can be reversed.

The ability to learn is very closely tied to a child's environment and can be improved by altering the environment.

In the Prince Edward County, Virginia, research, it was found that black children who were denied educational experiences for four years performed significantly lower on intelligence tests than black children who had an opportunity to leave the county and receive an education. Intelligence test scores between the two groups differed as much as 30 points. When Prince Edward County schools re-opened and youngsters were placed in carefully selected classrooms with excellent teachers who believed they could learn, many children increased their aptitude test performance by 15 to 20 points in a single year.[5]

Benjamin Bloom has also done research on the effect of environment upon individual development.[6] He cites examples of twins and siblings

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5 Robert L. Green, "The Effects of Resumed Schooling on the Measured Intelligence of Prince Edward County's Negro Children," Journal of Negro Children, Spring 1969.

6 Benjamin S. Bloom, "Environment," Chapter 6 in Stability and Change in Human Characteristics, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York, 1964.

reared together and apart to give evidence that "two environments which may be equal in their effects on intellectual growth or school achievement may be even more variable in their effects on attitudinal and emotional development.

Bloom concludes, "The nature of the individual's pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness may be largely determined by the nature of the environmental conditions under which he has lived in his formative years. Furthermore, although individuals in a democracy may not be equal at birth, much of their inequality at maturity may be ascribed to the lack of equality of opportunity . . . ."[7]

Yet a Nobel prize-winning physicist, William Shockley, argues for the expansion of research evaluating the relative effects of heredity and environment on human intelligence performance.[8] Underlying his proposal is his assumption that black students' performance on intelligence tests were low due to genetic rather than environmental inferiority.

Arthur Jensen has presented a similar position.[9] After a lengthy review of the literature on testing and socio-economic status, he concludes that genetic factors are more important than environmental factors in

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7 Ibid.

8 W. Shockley, "Possible Transfer of Metallurgical and Astronomical Approaches to the Problem of Environmental versus Ethnic Heredity." Science, 1966, 154, 428 (Abstract).

9 A. R. Jensen, "How Much Can We Boost IQ and Scholastic Achievement?" Harvard Educational Review, 1969, 39, 1-123.

determining IQ. He does leave himself a way out by conceding that prenatal environmental factors such as nutrition, multiple birth and prematurity can influence a child's learning ability. It is hard to tell how Jensen can separate the influence of prenatal environmental factors from early childhood experience which may also include malnutrition, parasite infestation and a host of other problems.

In Jensen's research the entire lower income test group is composed of black children. The entire middle income group is white. In such a situation, how can he determine whether low achievement is due to genetics (i.e. race) or environment (i.e. socioeconomic status)? Perhaps it was difficult for him to find a large enough group of middle income blacks to test. But it should not have been difficult to find a large enough group of lower income whites.[10]

The Relationship of Attitude to Achievement

Just as a researcher's attitude may influence his work, a teacher's attitude may influence the performance of his students. Teachers often blame a student's poor performance on his or her attitude not realizing that their own attitudes may lie at the base of the problem.

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10 For a fuller discussion of this position, read Robert L. Green, "Environment and Educational Achievement: Implications for Head Start and Social Change." Speech given at the National Head Start Conference. Los Angeles, California, November 4, 1969 (sponsored by the Office of Child Development, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Rosenthal and Jacobson conducted interesting tests on this subject.[11] After giving non-verbal IQ tests to students in an elementary school in a lower income neighborhood, they randomly labeled 20 per cent of the children in each classroom "intellectual bloomers." They explained to teachers that these children could be expected to make "remarkable gains" during the year. In reality there was no difference between the test scores of these children and others in the classrooms.

When Rosenthal and Jacobson retested all the children at the end of the school year, they found that the "intellectual bloomers" had indeed bloomed, showing an overall gain of four IQ points over the IQ gain of the control group children. Elashoff and Snow completely reanalyzed the Rosenthal-Jacobson data, but could not disprove it.[12]

J. Michael Palardy tested this pygmalion effect on the popular theory that girls can learn to read more readily than boys. Surveying first grade teachers, Palardy discovered that teachers who believed they would find this sex difference found it. Rosenthal adds that his well-known sex difference disappears when children are taught by a reading machine instead of by teachers.[13]

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11 Robert Rosenthal, "The Pygmalion Effect," Psychology Today, September, 1973.

12 Robert Rosenthal and D. B. Rubin, "Pygmalion Reaffirmed" in Pygmalion Reconsidered, Janet D. Elashoff and Richard E. Snow, eds., Charles A. Jones, Inc. 1971.

13 Robert Rosenthal, "The Pygmalion Effect," Psychology Today, September 1973.

Rosenthal proposes a four-factor theory to explain the pygmalion effect:

1. The Climate Factor. People apparently generate more warmth, attention and emotional support when they expect good things from their children, students or clients. In a variety of studies including educational, clinical and industrial situations, "special potential" subjects report their teachers or counselors to be more positive, accepting, perceptive and friendly.

2. The Feedback Factor. This factor also involves warmth and affection, but depends on response from the student. Teachers appear to wait longer for "high achievers" to answer questions and give them more praise for correct responses.

3. The Input Factor. Five out of five studies show that teachers tend to teach more material and more difficult material to their special students. For example, Victor Beez told 30 Head Start teachers they could expect poor performance from their children and 30 that they could expect exceptional performance from theirs. Observers noted that teachers of the "bright" children worked much harder than the others. In one exercise 87 per cent of teachers with "bright" children taught eight or more words. Only 13 per cent of the teachers with "dull" children tried to teach that many. In these "input" studies, expectations were translated into actual alterations in teaching style and content.

4. The Output Factor. Teachers tend to encourage greater responsiveness in their "bright" students. Eleven out of twelve studies show that teachers call on these students more often, ask them more

difficult questions and prompt them toward the correct answer.

When students who were not expected to achieve did so, Rosenthal noticed that teachers reacted negatively. Instead of being pleasantly surprised, the teachers usually interpreted the behavior as "maladjustment" or "troublemaking".

When teachers are not told which students will be achievers or non-achievers, how do they usually decide? Eleanor Leacock says that socio-economic status and race are major factors.[14] In a study of two middle and two lower income schools, Leacock found that 40 per cent of teachers' comments about poor children were negative, compared to 20 per cent of comments about middle income children. Forty-three per cent of comments about black students were negative compared to 17 per cent of comments about white students. Is it any wonder that many urban children drop out of school? Sometimes they feel defeated before they even begin.

SOCIETAL PROBLEMS AND CLASSROOM ACHIEVEMENT

Social problems, whether racial or economic, have a direct bearing on education. Educational leaders must understand these problems if they are to understand their students.

Urban school administrators must be aware of U.S. welfare problems.[15,16]

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14 Ibid.

15 Robert L. Green, "The Training of Counselors and Mental Health Workers: A Look at the Future--The Role of Advocacy," presented at the 1st annual Conference on Training Minorities and the Disadvantaged, October 7-10, 1973. Michigan State University

16 For further study of Welfare and Urban Economics: (1) Jedd L. Teller, ed., Welfare State and Welfare Society, A symposium by U.S. and Israeli Specialists on Urban Problems; (2) William Tabb, "The Political Economy of the Black Ghetto."

For example, government programs designed to help the poor have tended to help the program administrators and the "deserving poor", that is, the talented and vocal leaders of the poor.[17]

Our current welfare system tends to break up the family. For example, the "100 rule" in Michigan states that a man will lose his ADC benefits if he works more than 100 hours a month even when the additional income is less than the ADC payment. The father may either leave home to help his family or stop trying to improve his situation.

Welfare tends to be viewed in a negative sense in the U.S., while other countries such as Sweden consider the needs of the people more important than an antiquated work ethic. Americans need to realize that poverty is the plight of the country rather than the plight of the individual. There must be a redefinition of welfare for the rich and the poor.

Urban school superintendents must recognize that an overwhelming number of urban residents live in substandard housing. The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders found that inadequate housing was one of the major complaints of residents in areas where civil disorders had taken place.[18] When people have to worry about having a roof over their heads, they do not have time to worry about their children's education.

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17 Robert L. Green, "The Training of Counselors and Mental Health Workers: A Look at the Future--The Role of Advocacy," presented to 1st Annual Conference on Training Minorities and the Disadvantaged, Michigan State University, October 7-10, 1973.

18 Ibid.

The training of urban school superintendents cannot be divorced from problems of health care and child mortality.[19,20] The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development reported in 1969:

> Because of environmental factors, children in the lower social classes are often born with inferior resistance to infection . . . We have a major problem of poverty, nutrition, sanitation, home conditions in this country which impinge adversely on infant mortality . . . The sheer facts of poverty and realities of living can, in themselves, be barriers to the use of health services. How can you interest someone in goal-oriented concepts of health building if his concern is with survival. . . Preventive medical care and social casework are not very meaningful if you are concerned with the rats that run across your children's beds at night . . . Thus our objective must be not so much the reduction of infant mortality but the creation of conditions that will assure that every child is well born and will be reared in conditions of normal growth and development that will enable him to fulfill his genetic potential.[21]

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19 Robert L. Green, "The Training of Counselors and Mental Health Workers: A Look at the Future--The Role of Advocacy," presented to 1st Annual Conference on Training Minorities and the Disadvantaged, Michigan State University, October 7-10, 1973.

20 For further study of nutrition and its effect upon learning: (1) J.J. Cowley, "Time, Place, and Nutrition: Some Observations From Animal Studies," in N.S. Scrimshaw and J.E. Gordon, eds., Malnutrition, Learning, and Behavior, MIT Press; 1968; (2) E.P. Crump, E. Payton and C.P. Horton, Cambridge, Mass.

"Growth and Development IV: Relationship between Prenatal Maternal Nutrition and Socioeconomic Index, Weight of Mother, and Birth Weight of Infant," American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, 1959; (3) H. F. Eichenwald and P. C. Fry. "Nutrition and Learning," Science, 1969; (4) M. T. Erickson, "Intelligence: Prenatal and Preconception Environmental Influences," Science, 1967.

21 Robert L. Green, "Urban America and Crucial Issues Facing Higher Education," Journal of Afro-American Issues, Fall 1972.

The crime and violence which is threatening to strangle American cities must also be studied by urban administrators. In many cases, police seem to patrol and police inner city areas, rather than protect them. Urban educational leaders should know that the heaviest victims of urban crime are the poor and minority peoples who are forced to live in neighborhoods with the highest crime statistics and no protection. Urban educators should know that criminal activities in some city neignborhoods become high finance, honest employment and even good citizenship in other contexts. For example, many blacks have been jailed for running the numbers, while today many middle and upper middle income individuals are lauded for supporting state lotteries.

The issues of busing, housing, welfare, health care, crime and unemployment are not the exclusive domain of politicians and social workers. These issues affect the education of every urban school child and educators must take a stand on them. If Shockley, a physicist, can be an expert on education, then educators certainly have a right to speak out on these issues.

John F. Kennedy said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." I think it is fair to interpret that as "Ask not what your school system can do for you, but what you can do for poor or disadvantaged children or their families." Young people need to know what educational leaders and administrators stand for--and they need to know that urban administrators are standing up for them. Most important of all, urban school administrators can and must provide leadership for social and economic reform when it relates to the educability of their children.